

Seeds of Faith, People of Faith Devotional

November 22 through November 28



**Growing commitment and
community in Christ**

Sunday, November 22

Scripture:

“...Jesse the father of David the King...Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ.” *Matthew 1*

Genealogy is IN these days as it is evidently for Matthew. Thus his Gospel begins amid the heartbreaks and splendors of a family tree. Like most of our genealogy stories there were some good sheep and some black sheep along the way (most of us speak only of the good sheep in our family tree).

I am sure that Jesus didn't want to be known as a King. So He told Pilate. However, He did challenge Pilate and us about the nature of His Kingdom: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of God.” The Kingdom of God is like...a mustard seed, leaven, treasure hidden in a field, a merchant in search of fine pearls.

He invites us to accept him as the King of our Hearts and to live the marks of His Kingdom, such marks as truth and faith, grace and love, justice with peace. Puny things for the world in which we live? Maybe so. Yet they are reality qualities for our lives as we live in response to God's call and invitation to each of us, never coercing, but ever inviting. His grace abounds and amazes...for you...for me.

This is the concluding week for seventy-seven devotionals, and I think Pastor Haller for her leadership in the project and for the more than sixty members of Trinity who shared their thoughts and insights and prayers.

Thank you God for renewing us each day with Your Grace and love enabling us to share Your marks of the Kingdom in our speaking, living and giving. In Christ's name. Amen.

—Contributed by Pastor Dick Frazier

Monday, November 23

Scripture:

What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people....I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord. *Psalm 116: 12-14, 17-19*

There is no more appropriate way to end this series "Seeds of Faith – People of Faith" and look forward to next week's Thanksgiving celebration than by reflecting on the words of Psalm 116. Psalm 116 is a psalm of thanksgiving, the words of which we have often sung together as the Canticule for Thanksgiving after the offertory prayer in our Sunday morning services. While the authorship of this psalm is uncertain, it has often been attributed to David who being delivered out of very great dangers, relates what cruel torment and anguish of mind he endured, and then how remarkably he was preserved by God. Accordingly, this psalm would have been used in worship as someone celebrated deliverance from difficulties and troubles. Perhaps the worshipper actually faced the possibility of physical death. Or, perhaps the worshippers troubles included the death of a loved one, a broken relationship or economic struggles (struggles we share with those worshippers of old). Whatever the problem, the worshipper has come through darkness into light and has understood this to be the work of God. The worshipper's response is thanksgiving.

Let us likewise respond with thanksgiving for God's deliverance and bounty. Just as he provided it to David and to each of the people of faith we have studied over the past six weeks, God provides it to each of us. We need not look far to see evidence of God's bounty and deliverance. Most recently, God has provided us adequate bounty to expand our church home to be better able to welcome everyone to grow in the grace and love of Jesus Christ. Let us join with those that have come before us in offering thanksgiving for this deliverance and bounty. And, let us offer this thanksgiving and praise in the presence of all God's people. The news is too great to keep to ourselves. Finally, let us be certain, in this time of great need and always, that our thanksgiving and praise includes sharing God's delivery and bounty with all in need.

Dear God, We thank and praise you for hearing our voices and for the bounty you bestow on us daily. Amen.

—Contributed by Ragna Urberg

Tuesday, November 24

Scripture:

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. *1 Corinthians 15:25*

Christ the King Sunday is the climax and conclusion of the Church's liturgical journey through the life of Christ and the Gospel message. The beloved hymn, *Crown Him with Many Crowns*, was written by Matthew Bridges in 1851 and the tune written by George Elvey seventeen years later. This hymn invites us to join in the worshipful celebration of the Lamb who was slain. We live in a world where the enemies of Christ wage war against his authority and rule and entice us to join their ranks. We can take comfort in the reality that Jesus is now on the throne and protecting the faithful.

"Awake my soul and sing, of Him who died for me,

And hail him as thy matchless King, through all eternity."

Eternal God, watch over our souls, inspire us to live in peace and harmony never forgetting that we have nothing to fear from the world under Christ's most gentle rule and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

—Contributed by Jane Wuthrich

Wednesday, November 25

Scripture:

⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evil-doers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. ¹⁵But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. *2 Samuel 7:8-16*

The centerpiece of this scripture is God's faithfulness to His Word.

The prophet, Nathan, delivers to David God's word that David will not build a house, the Temple, for God, but God will build a house, a dynasty, of David's descendents to stand for all time. And so it was the Jesus was born through the lineage of David as God had promised and as Matthew so carefully described.

David's darker moments are yet to come but will not obscure or cancel the promise God made to him and his house. David will be chastened for his sins, but the promise is unconditional and will not be revoked. Individuals, including David, will suffer grievous loss through their disobedience, but the promise of God will remain steadfast.

So it is with us. By God's grace, through profession of faith and baptism, we are saved and made a part of the household of God. Life will still come at us, disobedience will exact a price, and the rain will fall on the just and the unjust. But God will not waver nor will His promise be rescinded.

Jesus said to his disciples (John 14:1-4), "... for I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. God is faithful to His Word.

Jesus said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Today, O God, we affirm Thy gracious presence. We claim Thy loving promise. We bow in worship at Thy feet. Amen.

—Contributed by Steve Harter

Thursday, November 26

Scripture:

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

³he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff —
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me



in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long. *Psalm 23*

The Lord is my Shepherd!

Pictures of Jesus are scattered throughout the Bible. One of the more famous pictures is based on Psalm 23. It starts with the well known words, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Years ago, as I was about to undergo major heart surgery, my pastor asked me to think of my favorite picture of Jesus. One that I named without hesitation was the picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd depicted in Psalm 23.

To understand the images of this psalm, it is necessary to realize what a shepherd's daily work involves. Sheep are helpless, not unlike how I felt years ago facing surgery, and not unlike how each of us feels during difficult times. The helplessness of a sheep is especially apparent when a sheep accidentally rolls on its back. Sheep in that position are not able to turn over and get up by themselves. The shepherd rescues that sheep, before a predator makes that sheep its lunch!

We often have times when we feel powerless in our lives. Sometimes, we can't rely on a parent, grandparent, sister, brother, or even friends to help set us free from heavy burdens. But Jesus can! Jesus, our Good Shepherd, comes to all of us through His Holy Word and Sacraments. We can, in our church family, experience the green pastures and quiet waters with which our souls are nourished. Throughout the year and in our lives, we collectively focus on our Good Shepherd, who laid down His life to rescue us. In our Trinity family, we also gather together to worship and celebrate with joy and thanksgiving a living and risen Jesus, our Good Shepherd, who continues to care for all of us each and every day.

In what situations do you hear and feel the voice of the Good Shepherd who knows you?

May our Good Shepherd continue to guide us daily to the green pastures and quiet waters of heaven. Amen.

—Contributed by Carol Henke

Friday, November 27

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:8-16 [See Wednesday, November 25]

David is commonly revered as the greatest king of Israel. Chosen by God and anointed by Samuel to govern God's chosen people, he led them through many military victories and decades of prosperity. He was a man after God's own heart, and it was through his lineage that God promised to send the savior of mankind. This savior would also be a king, but in a radically different way from David. While David was an earthly king bedecked in riches and prestige, this savior-king was a homeless rabbi whose kingdom was of another world. This king led his followers not into wars but into a peace that passes all understanding. This king came to us in humble service to die for us and bring us into his Father's household. As his redeemed subjects, what better way could there be for us to show our love for our king than to emulate his actions?

Dear Lord, help us follow the example of our savior-king. Help us not to be distracted by the worries of this world, but live as citizens of your kingdom alone that we may experience the freedom our King has bought for us. Amen.

—Contributed by Laura Bohnke

Saturday, November 28

Scripture:

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever. *Isaiah 40:1-8*

We now move from Christ the King Sunday through Thanksgiving to a new year, the Season of Advent, a time of preparation to receive God's greatest gift.

Years ago, when I was a counselor at summer camps, we used to dread the noise in the dining room on dark, dismal, rainy days because the voices of the children always went up by decibels...when it was dark. In the sunshine there is no need to raise your voice, but when the darkness presses in, the voices are often strident and noisy.

There is plenty of darkness hovering over us these days. Is there any word from the Lord?

The first voice you hear in Isaiah's passage is neither strident nor harsh. The people who walked in so much darkness, now returning to their homeland, hear these words: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Handel, in the opening strains of the Messiah, interpreting this passage, assigns the opening notes to a soft woodwind. Thus as we turn to the Season of Advent we hear a voice of encouragement and hope amid whatever darkness hangs over us.

May we continue our devotions with the new booklet with its bright cover, daily devotions based on the thoughts of C.S. Lewis.

Dear Lord, as we wait in your hope to celebrate you coming among us in a manger and your coming again at the end of time, help us to live not in fear but in faithfulness, as Saint Paul challenges us to lay aside darkness and put on the armor of the light through Christ our Lord. Amen.

—Contributed by Pastor Dick Frazier

